Third phase of AIDS control

1456. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether after successful completion of Phase-I and II campaign for National AIDS Control programme, third phase with the three pronged strategy is being considered;

(b) if so, whether the third phase is envisaged to strengthen a link between general health programme and prevention of HIV/AIDS, etc.; and

(c) if so, whether it would reach upto village level with the aims of care, support, treatment and prevention?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) Yes, Sir. National AIDS Control Programme-Ill (NACP-III) has commenced with effect from 1st April, 2007 with a three pronged strategy prevention, care & support including treatment and institutional strengthening.

(b) Yes, Sir. Under the NACP-III, synergy with programmes under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) including Revised National Tuberculosis Programme (RNTCP) and Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) programme has been ensured. At district level, all activities will be implemented by the District Health Society.

(c) Services for HIV testing and counselling and other preventive measures will be available under NACP-III in rural areas through NRHM set-up. Antiretroviral treatment will be made available upto district or sub-district level based on prevalence of HIV/AIDS and number of persons on treatment.

Toxic content in medical instruments

1457. SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) what steps are proposed to be taken to phase out the toxic metal mercury which is currently in use in medical instruments at all the hospitals in the country;

(b) whether national policy would be framed in this regard to save the environment and public health; and

(c) if so, by when and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) to (c) There are no known cases of health problems resulting from the involvement of mercury in hospitals. The breakage of mercury thermometers may lead to spillage of some mercury but the same is supposed to be collected as a part of the hospitals health and safety practices and mercury bearing waste, irrespective of the source of generation containing mercury and mercury compounds equal to or greater than 50 mg. per kilogram is required to be disposed of only as per the requirement of the Hazardous Waste (Management and Handling) Rules as amended in May, 2003.

While Mercury thermometers/sphygmomanometers used traditionally for measuring body temperature/blood pressure, have been replaced in some countries due to environmental concerns, there are also concerns in many countries about the availability, affordability and accuracy of alternative devices. At present there is no proposal to phase out the use of mercury based instruments in Government Hospitals as also in private health facilities.

Medical plants in the country

†1458. SHRI SAMAN PATHAK: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have details of species of medicinal plants and their numbers found in the country;

(b) whether it is a fact that the medicinal plants which are found in the Himalayan regions are being taken out of the country illegally; and

(c) whether Government have any proposal to open research centers for medicinal plants in the Himalayan region, Darjeeling and Sikkim?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) As per available reports, it is estimated that there are about 8000 plant species having medicinal properties.

(b) There are no such reports.

(c) There is no such proposal. Government has set up a Task Force on High Altitude Medicinal Plants to deal with various issues related to development of these plants.

Pesticides and hormones in eatables

1459. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the growing use of pesticides in crops and hormone injections used to keep the produce fresh have increased the poisoning risk;

(b) whether it is also a fact that according to environmentalists, the content of pesticides in our fruits and vegetables far exceeds the permissible limits and his Ministry has failed to curb the growing use of pesticides in crops; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to contain the use of pesticides and injectable hormones in crops, fruits and vegetables?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) and (b) The pesticides, if used indiscriminately on crops may be a risk of health. However, it is essential for controlling the pests and diseases in crops. In order to ensure that pesticides used are safe, the Ministry of Health and F.W. prescribes maximum residue limits (MRLs)

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.